

EFFECT OF RETIREMENT PIANS ON ORGANIZATIONAL WORK ATTITUDE AND ENGAGEMENT OF NONACADEMIC STAFF AT MANDALAY UNIVERSITY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study intends to explore the effect of nonacademic staff perception on government retirement plan on their attitude to work, and the influence of this attitude on their engagement at Mandalay University of Distance Education. This study focused on 112 sample staff out of total 203 nonacademic staff working at this university, by using simple random sampling method. Complete responses are received from 110 respondents. Questionnaire survey is conducted with structured questionnaires. From descriptive analysis (by analyzing the mean values), most of the nonacademic staff perceived positively the government retirement plan. They feel that this retirement benefit will be safety for them when they are at old age. Lump sums amount (gratuity) they can get when they retire is also incentive to them. They also have good attitude to their work. They do not conduct malpractice at office for finding extra money, and they do not go outside work during office hours. They come to work regularly, even in after office time; they stay at office if it is necessary. They have high conscious for not go outside during office time and not off early. Since they have high engagement, they feel that their university provides good information sharing between top and lower levels and also between same ranks and among peers. They believe that their work is meaningful and important, and their contributions are recognized. From regression analysis, it is found that the government retirement plan is impacting on their work attitude, and this attitude influences on their engagement. In general, nonacademic staff attitude toward work is very important for university image and also for students' satisfaction. Currently, nonacademic staff of Mandalay University of Distance Education have good attitude towards their work, and they concern the ethical conduct. This good status must be retained for education qualification and university quality and image.

Keywords: Nonacademic Staff, Mandalay University of Distance Education, Retirement Plan, Organizational Attitude to Work, Engagement

Introduction

Higher education institutions such as colleges and universities require individuals who are engaged to their work. The quality and attainment of goals of all educational organizations (schools, colleges and universities) largely rely not only on the willingness of teachers but also on the willingness and engagement of nonacademic staff. In Myanmar, in higher education institutions, the committed staff has strong psychological ties to their universities by considering not only current salaries but also the retirement benefits (retirement plan). Thus, their engagement would be upgraded by effective and attractive pension rewards. Moreover, their attitude towards their work can effect on their engagement.

Nearly fifty years ago Whyte (1956) evolved the concept of 'The organization man' as one who is over committed to his organization. Whyte described the organization man as a person who not only worked for the organization, but also belonged to it. Organization men believed in the administrators, leaders of the universities (e.g., rectors), and also to the disciplines and systems they have to be compliance with. Among the systems of higher education institutions, the retirement

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system has large influence on their desire to stay with respective university for long-term. However, the retirement system alone would not be enough to upgrade their engagement. Their love on work and their commitment to work will also influence on their dedication, and loyalty. Thus, in Myanmar higher education institutions, there would be many organization men and their engagement would tie with the retirement plan and work attitude.

Rationale of the study

Myanmar government had planned the systematic retirement plan for all government staff, including staff working at the universities. In Myanmar universities, not only academic staff but also nonacademic staff has serious concern on the retirement benefits. The staff expectation on retirement benefits can effect on staff's attitude towards their work, and this work attitude will solicit the commitment and loyalty (engagement) from them. While the government has justified the pension rate with changing living cost, the retirement plans become attractiveness to the staff.

Employee engagement can be defined as a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values (Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday, 2004). An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. In the education sector, the work attitude and employee engagement can change positively or negatively the quality of education and the development and image of universities. In this modern era, the engagement and work attitude of nonacademic staff become crucial in providing student service to their convenient and smart learning especially in distance learning. Thus higher education institutions, particularly universities must work to develop and nurture engagement and good work attitude of nonacademic staff.

In Myanmar, universities, especially universities delivering the distance education, need urgently to consider the engagement and work attitude of nonacademic staff because their administrative work and their student service are at the crucial role in developing the flawless processes throughout the student study period (from entering into university to the end of study). Thus, the engagement of nonacademic staff must be emphasized by the administrators and leaders of the universities. They can develop attractive retirement plan at the one hand, and at the other hand, they must develop the atmosphere for upgrading good work attitude of nonacademic staff.

Research questions

The four research questions are explored:

- (1) Is current retirement plan attractive to nonacademic staff at the Universities of Distance Education?
- (2) How do the nonacademic staffs show their attitude towards work at the Universities of Distance Education?
- (3) How do the nonacademic staffs engage at the Universities of Distance Education?
- (4) How do the retirement plan and work attitude influence on the engagement of nonacademic at the Universities of Distance Education?

Objectives of the study

- (1) To analyze the effect of the perception towards the retirement plans on organizational attitude to work of nonacademic staff at Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE)
- (2) To analyze the effect of organization attitude to work on the engagement of nonacademic staff in Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE)

Methods of the study

This study focuses only on universities which are delivering the distance education. There are two government distance-universities in Myanmar: Yangon University of Distance Education and Mandalay University of Distance Education. The two-stage sampling approach is applied in this study. At the first stage, one distance university is randomly selected from two distance universities: Mandalay University of Distance Education is randomly selected.

There are 203 nonacademic staff who are working at the Mandalay University of Economics. By using the Raosoft sample size calculator (with 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level, 203 populations and 80% response distribution) is used to identify the sample size: sample size is 112. Simple random sampling method is used without concern on department and position. Questionnaire survey is conducted by distributing the structured questionnaires to randomly selected 112 nonacademic staff. The complete responses are received from 110 respondents. For data analysis, descriptive and regression methods are applied.

Literature Review

This section contains the definitions and concepts of main variables described in developing the conceptual framework: the retirement plan, organizational attitude to work, and employee engagement. Then, the review on the previous articles relating to these variables is presented. The review on these previous articles mainly focused on their conceptual frameworks, variables they used, methods and findings from their analyses.

General purposes of retirement plan

The general purposes of retirement plans are to ensure that every government staff receives retirement benefits as and when due, to assist improvident individuals by ensuring that they save to cater for their livelihood during old age, and to establish a uniform set of rules and regulations for the administration and payment of retirement benefits.

Attitude to work

Newman, Joseph & Hulin (2010) described that the three elements of work or job attitude are job satisfaction, job involvement and affective organizational commitment. According to Loke (1976), job satisfaction is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job. This definition includes both appraisal and emotional elements of work. The affective or emotional components of job satisfaction focus on the emotions an individual experiences based on the perception that the work allows the fulfillment of individual's values (Locke, 1969).

Kanungo (1982) identified job involvement as a cognitive state of an individual that is the result of the ability to satisfy intrinsic needs of the individual. Those who are involved in their jobs are individuals who satisfy critical psychological needs (e.g., need for autonomy) (Kanungo, 1979). Solinger et al. (2008) defined organizational commitment as an attitude of an employee reflected in a combination of affect, cognition, and action readiness to serve and enhance the organization's success.

Employee engagement

Engagement at work was conceptualized by Kahn, (1990) as the 'harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles. In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. Csikzentmihalyi (1975) defined it as the 'holistic sensation' that, people feel when they act with total involvement.

Employee engagement is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its values. Thus, employee engagement is a barometer that determines the association of a person with the organization. Engagement is most closely associated with the existing construction of job involvement (Brown 1996). Job involvement is defined as 'the degree to which the job situation is central to the person and his or her identity (Lawler & Hall, 1970).

Job involvement results form a cognitive judgment about the needs satisfying abilities of the job. There are three basic aspects to promote employee engagement:

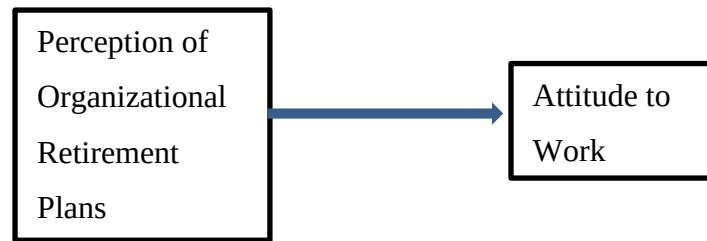
- (1) the employees and their own unique psychological makeup and experience,
- (2) the employers and their ability to create the conditions, and
- (3) the interaction between employees at all levels.

In this regard, employees and their personality, the employers' attitude and ability, and communication between employees are equally important for developing employee engagement. A highly engaged employee will consistently deliver beyond expectations. In the workplace research on employee engagement (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002) have repeatedly asked employees 'whether they have the opportunity to do what they do best everyday'. Thus, employee engagement is critical to any organization that seeks to retain valued employees.

Employee perception on retirement plan and employee work attitude

Manuel and Asuquo (2010) presented the effect of university workers' perception of organizational retirement plans on their attitude to work. Their study objectives are to examine the perception of the university retirement plan, to find out the university workers perception about their university retirement plan influence their attitude towards work, to establish the type of attitude, university workers develop towards as the result of their university retirement plan, and to identify universities retirement plans which have been established for their workers.

Their study's targeted population is 100 academic staff and 100 nonacademic staff, and sample size is 50 each (total 100). They used the structured questionnaire consists of 5 point scaled question items for main variables. The results showed that workers' attitude to work was largely unfavorable. However, there was a significant influence of perception of retirement plan on attitude to work across all categories of workers. Their conceptual framework is showed in Figure (1)



Source: Manuel and Asuquo (2010)

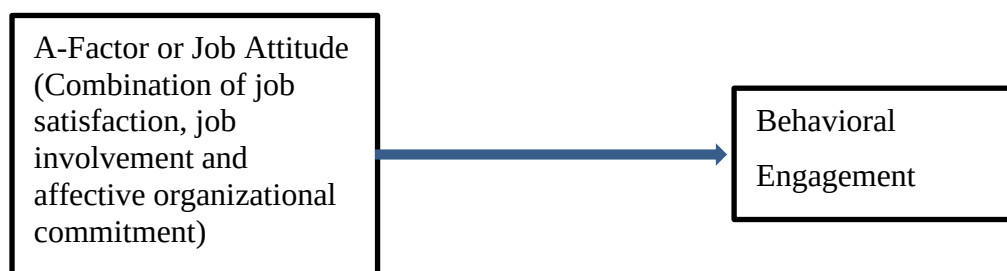
Figure (1) Conceptual Model of Manuel and Asuquo (2010)

The previous paper focused on two variables: perception of organizational retirement plans and attitude to work. This paper framed with two universities (University of Port Harcourt and Rivers State University of Science and Technology, located in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Attitude to work and employee engagement

Harrison et al., (2006) and Newman et al., (2010) proposed the attitude-engagement model in which attitude predicts individual effectiveness: Newman and Harrison (2008) labeled engagement. It is important to note that the most common conceptualization of employee engagement has been as an attitudinal variable, which is like job or work attitude.

Koenig (2013) conducted the research on the effect of job (work) attitude factors such as job satisfaction, job involvement and affective organizational commitment on employee engagement. In this research, researcher termed “A-Factor” as the combination of these three elements of job attitude. Their conceptual model is shown in Figure (2).



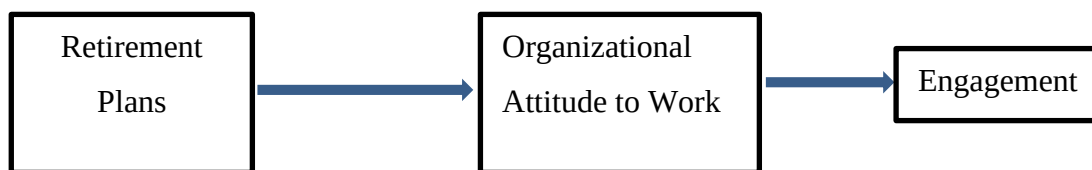
Source: Koenig (2013)

Figure (2) A-Factor (Job Attitude) and Behavioral Engagement

Findings from this previous research showed that the A-Factor (job attitude elements) influenced on behavioral engagement.

Conceptual framework of the study

The conceptual framework is developed based on some employee engagement theories and some findings from two previous studies as mentioned above. The conceptual framework is shown in Figure (3).



Source: Own Compilation

Figure (3) Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study's conceptual framework is developed with two conceptual assumptions: nonacademic staff on the retirement plan has the impact on their organizational attitude to work, and this organizational attitude to work influences on their engagement. These assumptions are conceptually adapted to the findings from research of two previous papers as mentioned above.

Hypotheses

In this study, the two hypotheses are proposed concerning the links between variables shown in the conceptual framework.

- (1) Nonacademic staff perception on the retirement plans has positive significant effect on their organizational attitude to work at Mandalay University of Distance Education
- (2) Nonacademic staff's organizational attitude to work influences on their engagement at Mandalay University of Distance Education

Findings from Descriptive Analysis

To explore the nonacademic staff perception level on the retirement plan of government, their work attitude level, and their engagement level, the descriptive analysis is conducted. Data are received from 110 staff. Mean values based on the response scores given by respondents and standard deviation values are calculated. The question items of each of the variables are adapted to the question items developed by the previous authors. The staff perception on retirement plan in Mandalay University of Distance Education is shown in Table (1).

Table (1) Perception on Retirement Plan

Sr. No.	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Knowing that entitled to a full age pension for current position	3.82	1.16
2	The old-age pension system can meet the demand for employees	3.83	0.78

Sr. No.	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.
3	Old age pension is helpful to the retirement plan to some extent	4.00	0.56
4	The pension benefit does not significantly support for old age*	2.52	1.01
5	Old age pensions do not provide sufficient security to employees	3.85	0.78
6	Having a pension system brings comfort to the employees	4.20	0.48
7	Retirement plan is one of the expectations of employees	4.47	0.52
Overall Mean		3.81	

Source: Survey Data (2024)

* Reverse Question Item

Most of the nonacademic staff at MUDE perceived positively the government retirement plan. They know that they can get full pension amount at the retirement age, it is helpful, and it would meet their demand, expectations and fulfill security at old age.

In this study, the staff attitude to work is also analyzed descriptively. The staff attitude to work is approached from the aspects of commitment to working time at the office and ethical value regarding the working time at office. The staff attitude to work in Mandalay University of Distance Education is shown in Table (2).

Table (2) Organizational Attitude to Work

Sr. No.	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Going to work regularly	4.31	0.65
2	Being in a regular office full time	4.25	0.68
3	Being in working outside as the salary is not enough*	2.38	1.13
4	There is no strict return by working hours	3.35	0.98
5	Doing a few transactions in the office to get extra cash*	1.81	0.87
6	Working/not working full time has no effect on pension entitlement	3.37	1.13
7	Has no penalty for doing other work during working hours	2.65	1.02
Overall Mean		3.16	

Source: Survey Data

* Reverse Question Item

Nonacademic staff at MUDE have good attitude to their work. In this study, as the result of staff perception on retirement plan and their work attitude, their engagement is assessed with descriptive method. The staff engagement in Mandalay University of Distance Education is shown in Table (3).

Table (3) Engagement

Sr. No.	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Feeling that organization is transparent and has good communication	3.85	0.83
2	Feeling comfortable speaking up and sharing opinions	3.98	0.47
3	No difficulty to present ideas to superiors and discuss with colleagues	3.91	0.67
4	Clear understanding of respective role and responsibilities	3.96	0.47
5	Opportunities for professional development and growth	3.62	0.78
6	Feel that respective work is meaningful and important	3.96	0.51
7	Good working relationship with colleagues	4.15	0.63
8	Feeling that staff contributions are recognized and appreciated	3.88	0.52
Overall Mean		3.91	

Source: Survey Data, 2024

In MUDE, most of the nonacademic staff has high engagement to their university. They feel that their university provides good information sharing between top and lower levels and also between same ranks and among peers.

Findings from Regression Analysis

To reach the main objectives of this research, simple linear regression analysis is conducted to examine the effect of perception on retirement plan on work attitude, and the effect of work attitude on engagement of nonacademic staff at MUDE. Data from 110 nonacademic staff are analyzed, and the results about the influence of perception on retirement plan on work attitude are shown in Table (4).

Table (4) Effect of Perception on Retirement Plan on Attitude to Work

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	1.729	0.493		3.504	0.001	
Perception on Retirement Plan	0.470***	0.129	0.331	3.641	0.000	1.000
R Square	0.109					
Adjusted R Square	0.101					
F Value	13.259***					

Dependent Variable is "Attitude to Work"

*** Significant at 1 percent level

** Significant at 5 percent level

* Significant at 10 percent level

From regression analysis, it is found that the nonacademic staff perception on retirement plan has positive significant effect on their organizational attitude to work at Mandalay University of Distance Education. Thus, the hypothesis (1) is accepted. The results about the influence of work attitude on staff engagement are shown in Table (5).

Table (5) Effect of Attitude to Work on Engagement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	3.265	0.283		11.541	0.000	
Attitude to Work	0.182**	0.080	0.215	2,282	0.024	1.000
R Square	0.046					
Adjusted R Square	0.037					
F Value	5.209**					

Dependent Variable is "Engagement"

*** Significant at 1 percent level

** Significant at 5 percent level

* Significant at 10 percent level

Survey results showed that the attitude to work has positive significant effect on nonacademic staff engagement to Mandalay University of Distance Education. Thus, the hypothesis (2) is accepted.

Discussion

Nonacademic staff at MUDE believes that the pension amount will bring comfort to them at the old age. They do not conduct malpractice at office for finding extra money, and they so not go outside work during office hours. They come to work regularly, even in after office time, they stay at office if it is necessary. Even though their working hours are not relating to pension amount, they are not considering their working hours for extra work. They understand their roles and responsibilities, and they feel that their work is meaningful and important, and their contributions are recognized.

The good attitude to work of nonacademic staff can be shaped by their positive perception on the retirement plan of the government. This good work attitude will retain them at MUDE with high commitment.

Conclusion

Most of the nonacademic staff at MUDE perceived positively the government retirement plan. They feel that this retirement benefit will be safety when they are at old age. Lump sums amount they can get when they retire is also incentive to them. Nonacademic staff at MUDE have good attitude to their work. They do not conduct malpractice at office for finding extra money, and they do not go outside work during office hours. They come to work regularly, even in after office time; they stay at office if it is necessary. Even though their working hours are not relating to

pension amount, they are not considering their extra working hours, as well as they have high conscious for not go outside during office time and not off early. In MUDE, most of the nonacademic staff has high engagement to their university. They feel that their university provides good information sharing between top and lower levels and also between same ranks and among peers. They believe that their work is meaningful and important, and their contributions are recognized. The government retirement plan is impacting on their work attitude, and this attitude influences on their engagement.

Suggestions and Recommendations

In general, nonacademic staff at distance universities plays at the crucial supporting role. Thus, their attitude toward work is very important for university image and also for students' satisfaction. Currently, nonacademic staff of Mandalay University of Distance Education have good attitude towards their work, and they concern the ethical conduct. This good status must be retained for education qualification and university quality and image.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Professor Dr. Khin Thant Sin, Rector of Mandalay University of Distance Education for her support and encouragement to submit this research paper to the Myanmar Academy of Art and Science. Our sincere thanks will also go to Dr. Win Mar, Pro- Rector of Mandalay University of Distance Education for her effective management for research quality and to be compliance with MAAS guidelines. We also would like to convey our deepest thanks to Dr. Myint Myint Kyi, Professor, Head of the Department of Economics, Mandalay University of Distance Education, for guiding us to collect data from Nonacademic Staff. We would like to appreciate the Nonacademic Staff of Mandalay University of Distance Education, for participating in survey as respondents.

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